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ABSTRACT

The current method of advising students at Grambling State University was compared with that of Computer-Assisted-Academic-Advisement-and-Placement (CAAAAP) to determine which approach would be more effective for advising students. The current method was a "semi-manual" method that takes quite a while to advise and place one student. As classes close, the process lengthens. Students remain in long lines, and counselors spend all their time reading printouts of course numbers. CAAAAP should allow for greater efficiency through the use of a computer program to store and match degree requirements and students' academic records. Records are produced as evaluation reports that show graduation requirements and each student's progress in completing these requirements. The CAAAAP should also provide students with immediate feedback for their personal choices. A review of university resources indicates that the hardware is in place, and only the software is needed. Seven design principles are outlined for the recommended implementation of CAAAAP. (Contains 11 references.) (SLD)

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A STUDY OF COMPUTER-ASSISTED-ACADEMIC-ADVISEMENT-AND-PLACEMENT AS COMPARED WITH MANUAL ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT AND PLACEMENT FOR IMPROVING ACADEMIC ADVISING AND ACCOUNTABILITY AT GRAMBLING STATE UNIVERSITY

Factors Affecting Students' Successful Survival of Their College Experiences

by

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Presented to

Dorothy Alexander, Ph. D.; Dean

College of Basic and Special Studies

A practical research paper presented to the Dean for study and immediate implementation for fulfilling the duties of academic advisement and registration at Grambling State University

Grambling State University

Grambling, Louisiana

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A STUDY OF COMPUTER-ASSISTED-ACADEMIC-ADVISEMENT-AND-PLACEMENT AS COMPARED WITH MANUAL ACADEMIC ADVISEMENT AND PLACEMENT FOR IMPROVING ACADEMIC ADVISING AND ACCOUNTABILITY AT GRAMBLING STATE UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

Problem

Presidents, administrators, academic counselors, and advisors, of colleges and universities are faced with the task of being accountable and at the same time producing excellence in freshmen students who have many kinds of problems that keep them from excelling or being "at-risk". Eventually, these problematic and at-risk students should become graduates. However, an educational leader will see that many at-risk students do not graduate because they lack an understanding of and are deficient in math, reading, English, and skills caused by a multitude of factors.

As an administrator plans and organizes the university's activities in terms of producing its graduates, each activity should be preceded with the question: "What has been done to improve the student in . . . ?" The answer is accountability. Another question; "Why are those students continually standing in those long lines with their academic counselors in the College of Basic and Special Studies (Adams Hall)?" Or, why are Academic Counselors selecting ZAP numbers for students' registration when students should be responsible for their own curriculum.

The growing need for accountability in advising students is a leading concern of academic counselors, deans, advisors, students, and educators. Case in point, Grambling State University's manual method of handling students' data is a frightening chore because there are many different components in academic advising and manually

monitoring of information and student. Information and students could be misplaced, not collected, or students could by-pass steps. In many cases, annotated records, the logs, and miscellaneous bits of paper which reflect the intense student/staff/counselor interactions are not readily accessible when attempting to advise students (Burdick, pp. 21-27, 1982).

There are many factors involved in placing students into the correct curriculum. On the account of a manual "hodge podge system" for tracking students in their selection of courses needed for fulfilling the requirements of their intended majors, students aren't monitored continuously. Annotated notes and file data tend to remain untreated until the end of the semester when students reports are required by the deans, departments, the university, or state and local governmental agencies. In particular, during a crisis situation, the needed information for advising student may not be on hand (Burdik, 1982). Al of which give the students the feeling that the university (or advisors) are giving them the run-around. Not only are these pieces of data needed for advising students, but are useful, in a summative fashion, for making mid-course or weekly corrections with the students as well as their files. The data may be used for monitoring the students and their program of study.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to compare the current method of advising students with that of Computer-Assisted-Academic-Advisement-and-Placement (CAAAAP) in order to determine which is more effective for advising students. The current method of advising students is a "semi-manual" method which takes from fifteen minutes to one hour or more (the fifth week, it takes three or more hours of searching the printout, checking different departments) to advise and place one student in his or her classes for the semester. As the classes close, the situation is lengthen. To get all students enrolled

for the semester, registration s usually carried on during the last two months of the semester and into the first month of the following semester in which classes will begin. The process is a dehumanizing procedure because students remain in lines for three to four hours or more trying to get classes and advisement. Counselors spend every minute of the work day (when not teaching BSS 101 Freshmen Seminar) reading computer printouts for the "ZAP" numbers of the courses from which to choose for students class schedule and placement, then keyboarding them into the computer.

CAAAAP should allow: (1) the student body to improve in its educational pursuit by efficiently matriculating the educational system and at the same time aid the student body maximize its educational potential; (2) accomplishment of accountability when systems are selected, established, and carried out to provide opportunities for champions to emerge (Jenkins, 1988); (3) the cut down of long lines in which students enter day after day, (4) academic counselors and advisors to do their job of counseling and advising students; (5) administrators, teachers, counselors, and students to get immediate feedback from their action for accurate decision-making. Thus, the implementation of Computer-Asssisted-Academic-Advisement-and-Placement would aid in the improvement of relationships within the university family. It would allow students to study, rather than waste time. It would allow counselors to be professionals in completing their responsibilities as well as other related university personnel.

Significance to the University

Grambling State University is a state "subsidized" (students are continually paying a greater percentage of tuition) coeducational institution, originally created for the purpose of meeting the educational, cultural, and social needs of the African-American citizens of the north central region in the state of Louisiana (GSU 1994-93). It must be

kept in mind, that the parents of the first students were slaves or children of slaves. That heritage is still a part of GSU. However, over the years, the mission of the University has evolved and now focuses on undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees, continuing and international education programs designed to meet the needs of a clientele that is primarily statewide and secondarily, national and international.

Grambling State University assumes in a unique way the role of a public university. It strives:

1. **to provide equal access to higher education for all applicants regardless of race, creed, sex, or physical limitations;**

2. **to provide opportunities for state, national and international students to develop intellectually, and to acquire appropriate job skills and self-actualization through instruction, research, public service and special programs which, by design, seek to meet the needs of all students enrolled, including those who have been adversely affected by educational, social and economic deprivation;**

3. **to generate new knowledge through pure and applied research and experimentation related to the curricula emphasis in business; science, technology, nursing, social work, liberal arts, education, and the College of Basic and Special Studies.**

4. **to render service to the citizenry of Louisiana, dedicated to raising the standard of living and enhancing the quality of life;**

5. **to strengthen the strategic position and vision of the University and the town via economic development and entrepreneur activities;**

6. **to create an environment where participatory management is an accepted organizational norm;**

7. **to strengthen its institutional effectiveness and academic programs by developing and implementing new and enhanced informational technologies; and**

8. **to create and achieve excellence in all programs and activities by:**
   a. **linking strategic planning with outcomes assessment;**
   b. **establishing an institutional culture;**
   c. **encouraging strategic thinking;**
   d. **implementing a model of institutional effectiveness;**

e. obtaining external evaluations from constituents; and
f. assuring adherence to statements of philosophy through annual performance evaluation (Lundy, 1993).

While using an open-door-policy for admitting students, the University endeavors to achieve excellence in post-secondary education through professional activity and creative teaching governed by the principles of academic freedom, it adheres to the philosophy that education is the cornerstone of a creative, enlightened, participatory, and responsive society.

The guiding principles of the University embrace the motto that "everybody is somebody" and the conviction that total student development is best achieved by providing an atmosphere conducive to the full realization of human dignity and productivity. Faculty members are aware that they are the caretakers of "diamonds in the rough." It is believed that such an atmosphere may optimally be provided for a total enrollment of over 7000 undergraduate and graduate students.

Definition

Computer-Assisted-Academic-Adivsement-and-Placement (CAAAAP) is simply a computer program that stores and matches degree requirements and students academic records. The records produced are evaluation reports that show graduation requirements and each student's progress in completing these requirements. Progress report may be printed, in most cases, the reports include:

> Graduation requirements (waivers or substitutions), specific courses to satisfy the requirements. additional credits for students Advancement and placement, College Level Examination Program (CLEP) a statement of proficiency in completing the requirements, and finally, who to see and where to go for additional assistance (Holmes, 1982).

Academic counselors and advisors work with students in group and individual sessions to help them meet their academic, personal, physical, or social needs. The CAAAAP program endeavors to serve students, teachers, and administrators. The objectives of the program can be grouped into three categories--social, academic, and placement into regular university curriculum. The CAAAAP seeks to help students develop an accurate concept of themselves through immediate feedback from their personal choices. Students are, also, helped to recognize the importance of achieving good mental and emotional health (Wright, 1984).

Individual inventory is concerned with testing to obtain a well-rounded picture of the student and having these test scores readily accessible. Career inventory and skill assessment is concerned with the students' career decision-making abilities. Cumulative folders containing much of this information are kept on file to be used by the teachers, counselors, academic counselors and advisors, and administrators (Grzywinski, 1986).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Effective academic advising has been shown to reduce the dropout rate of "At-risk" students. Academic counseling and advising can satisfy the need for information and guidance, provide personal interaction, and offer the opportunity to clarify short- and long-range goals (Astone, 1989).

With current economic trends, the public is more concerned with "What are they doing with our money," or "it cost too much." From the higher education point of view, budget cuts make it seem impossible to spend for non-productive systems.

> The only meaning that can be derived from these conditions is that the education profession finds itself in a position of having to prove not only that it is doing what it claims to be doing, but that it is continually doing it better (Miller, 1983).

To insure accountability of Miami-Dade Junior College, an integrated student flow model was developed to assure that student pass through certain checkpoints before proceeding on their education. The monitoring points are managed by counselors with information supplied by the support system of the college.

The importance of Advisement and counseling services at Miami-Dade were highlighted when the president allocated additional positions to student services as part of an educational reform program. The progression of students are carefully monitored by members of the students' service staff, and when students experiences academic difficulty their records are flagged and the students are requested to undergo special intervention programs (immediately). The results of the assessment program administered on campus are available within 15 minutes.

PROCEDURES

What we have

Grambling State University has a Digital 9000 computer with the capacity to be call the "Third Largest Computer at an University in the University States." The hardware is in place, however, it needs to be programmed for CAAAAP. The faculty and staff is competent to carry out the many task of advising, counseling, registering, teaching, and other duties. Therefore, by going to and observing other universities that have successfully implemented and is successfully using CAAAAP, a plan could be put in motion to update Grambling State University system.

Implementation and Evaluation

Implementation and evaluation of the computer-assisted advisement program should be guided by seven (7) design principles. Each principle or step should be in a sequential order accompanied by a series of task to be accomplished in each step (Homes).

The design principles are:

1. **Review and Evaluate the Present System--stating the objectives of the present advisement system. Seek advice from the National Academic Advising Association and other organizations.**

2. **Determine and Identify the Needs of Goals Desired--after a survey is conducted, the results will help with the needs and wants.**

3. **Explore the Alternatives--through reviews of literature, on-site visits to other campuses or businesses and contacting the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers Machine Records.**

4. **Identify Limitations--this is done after steps one through three are completed by assessing how effectively the needs are being met.**

5. **Design the System--identification of necessary data elements, their sources, and methods of input.**

6. **Implement the System--develop an action plan and check-list, including an established timetable for implementation.**

7. **Evaluate the System--reviewing this covers three areas of analysis such as, program analysts and resources analysis.**

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED

The CAAAAP systems approach should be a holistic approach for solving the current academic counseling, advising and registration problems at Grambling State University. The approach for solving the problems should be done in such a manner that everybody will feel good abut themselves as well as GSU. Therefore, all affected personnel should have input at the beginning for their concerns. The involved personnel includes;

1. **The computer center and its personnel**

2. **GSU Catalogue; therefore, persons from each college, department, etc. who are responsible for the curriculum and advising. The goal is to make sure the information is correct, and that students follow the planned requisites and prerequisite leading toward graduation.**

3. **The College of Basic and Special Studies; Dean, Academic Counselors, Records, the Coordinator, Attendance, and the Coordinator of testing.**

4. **Registrar Office; Admission, Records, and ICP (others).**

5. **Input from;**

   a. **The Accounting Office**

   b. **Financial Aid**

   c. **Developmental Education**

   d. **Advisors from each school, department, and college.**

6. **Student Life**

   a. **Housing**

   b. **Counseling**

      (1) **Career**

      (2) **Personal**

7. **Career Placement Center**

8. **Student representatives (five or so).**

9. **Others who are concerned with and are involved with the academic the registration process.**

How to Do it

Using a holistic approach, the system should;

1. **Have all involved as one, even in the in planning stage.**

2. **Keep students concerns first.**

3. **Have each area make sure that the information is accurate.**

4. **Make sure nothing is assumed. Meaning no one is to speak, do, or act for another area in which one is not involved.**

EXPECTATIONS

In view of budget cuts and increased expectation in production, university leaders must look at its position as it relates to civilizations. "Those (civilization) who responded weakly, ineffectively, and with cautions reservations, perished" (Baham, 1987). A university must look at itself in terms of meeting the challenges of today, then meet and satisfy the opportunity with a fulfilling commitment for survival.

For administrators, the systems approach in higher education, therefore, places the responsibility for increased productivity "on the individual educator in the classroom, on the professionals as a whole, and on the general public which both supports the industry and benefits from its services" (Miller, 1983).

CAAAAP will assist academic counselors and advisors in helping student plan programs, evaluate progress, and identify special learning needs that are essential features of advising while at the same time help students develop positive attitudes toward the university and in the process, decrease drop-out rates from at-risk students. This is especially true when advisors are familiar with appropriate campus resources; such as the counseling center, library, special areas, and make referrals when needed.

But, most of all, get rid of the long lines during registration. Also, long lines for Financial Aid. In time, it is expected that long lines in all areas should decrease during registration. Also, parents in the lines with students who have ACT/SAT scores of 21 or better will say "... taking my daughter to ——— University, because I am not going to sit here any longer. I know I should be able to leave her, but with a situation like this, I want to see everything in place because this is her first time away from home. Grambling ought to be 'shamed of itself doing registration like this in this time and age." A father

said, "What do you need that printout for? I know a computer could do that kind of stuff."

The implementation of a system such as CAAAAP will be justified by its capability to prove convincingly that the university, its faculty, and its staff is doing what it purport to be doing. Importantly, the university is doing what it purport to be doing in measurable terms. That is, admitting students into the University and efficiently preparing them to graduate.

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